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August 13, 1952

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION FOR CONFLICTS IN THE POLITBURO,
with Special Reference to Stalin's Passing from Power.

1. National policy calls for placing "maximum strain on the Soviet structure of power", reducing Soviet power, and bringing about "a basic change in the conduct of international relations by the government in power in Russia" (NSC 20/4 para. 19 a and b, 21 g; cf. NSC 10/5 para. 1 a).
2. One of the most favorable occasions for furthering these objectives may be Stalin's passing from power. This theme however has important relations to practically every aspect of the Soviet problem. The present paper is restricted to conflicts in the Politburo in order to limit the topic to manageable proportions. The topic is central because if Stalin's passing does bring major changes they are likely to begin in the Politburo and spread out from there.
3. This paper is also relevant to strains that may emerge before Stalin has fully passed from power. For example, since rivalries already exist in the Politburo and Stalin's control may be relaxing as he grows older, it is conceivable that the death of one of the principal aspirants to the succession might upset some delicate equilibrium and precipitate a crisis, arising perhaps out of Stalin's violent efforts to restore his policy of divide and rule.
4. It is only a serious possibility, not a certainty, that conflicts related to Stalin's passing from power will bring major changes.

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But if they do they may lead to a successor regime which is either markedly better or markedly worse than the present, from the U.S. point of view, and might even lead to general war or general collapse. Politburo conflicts thus have such weighty potentialities that they call for active preparation on our part. It may also be possible to pave the way, to a modest extent, for their eruption in desirable forms.

5. In the psychological field, preparatory work should be three-fold:

urgent

a. As a matter of priority existing information and intelligence should be inventoried, all that is likely to be additionally useful collected, and the results brought to bear on factors likely to influence strains in the Politburo and their modes of expression.

b. In the light of such insight and within the context of the more probable patterns of future events in general, the principal ways in which Politburo conflicts might develop should be analyzed and corresponding psychological courses of action sketched, as a repeated staff exercise designed to make possible prompt and judicious decisions when the time comes. Since Stalin may die any time, this task should not be delayed for the completion of ~~5~~a. above.

c. Ways of enhancing Politburo conflicts in a useful manner before Stalin's passing should be continuously studied, developed

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if promising, and employed when feasible and desirable. This task should envisage not only conflicts as such but also those contributory motivations which might eventually shape events in directions favorable to U.S. interests.

6. Each member agency and the Director of PSB is requested to name one staff member as principal point of contact concerning the work outlined in paragraph 5.

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